

Hands & Voices

PARENT EVENT GUIDE



HANDS &
VOICES™

FOR FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN
WHO ARE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

December 2022 Version

This could be you:

“Another successful meeting just finished where everything went well. You had a great turnout, the presenters did a wonderful job, the food was tasty, the panel discussion was insightful, and the families who attended left with new information and felt supported. You are tired but you feel satisfied. You made a difference today; you are fulfilling your mission.”

Families who have the opportunity to connect with other families who also have children who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing (D/HH) benefit in many ways. The experience of raising a child who is D/HH can be isolating, and parents who have limited experience with deafness may feel ill-equipped to make decisions for their child. Providing occasions where families can engage with other parents/caregivers and family members to exchange experiences while learning information helpful to their child’s development can be affirming and empowering. Events vary widely from simple social gatherings lasting a few hours with a limited budget and planning, to more complex, like a family conference lasting several days.

How to Use the Parent Event Guide

The Parent Event Guide provides comprehensive considerations for event planning.

Each program is encouraged to assess the needs of their families as well as the capacity of their staff and budget to determine the best fit for use of this Guide and event planning considerations. As the program evolves and funding and staff grow, additional opportunities shared here can be considered. You will find the following icon throughout this Guide to highlight ideas and considerations when resources are limited and/or when a group is just beginning to implement event planning. Look for this icon:



This Parent Event Guide was inspired by a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) parent of a deaf child saying, “I would like to help organize a family event, but I am not really sure how.” The Event Guide was therefore developed to assist interested parents, organizations, and programs to create family-to-family events. As Helen Keller said, “Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much”. May this Event Guide be a starting point to planning events that bring together families of Deaf/Hard of Hearing children in your community.

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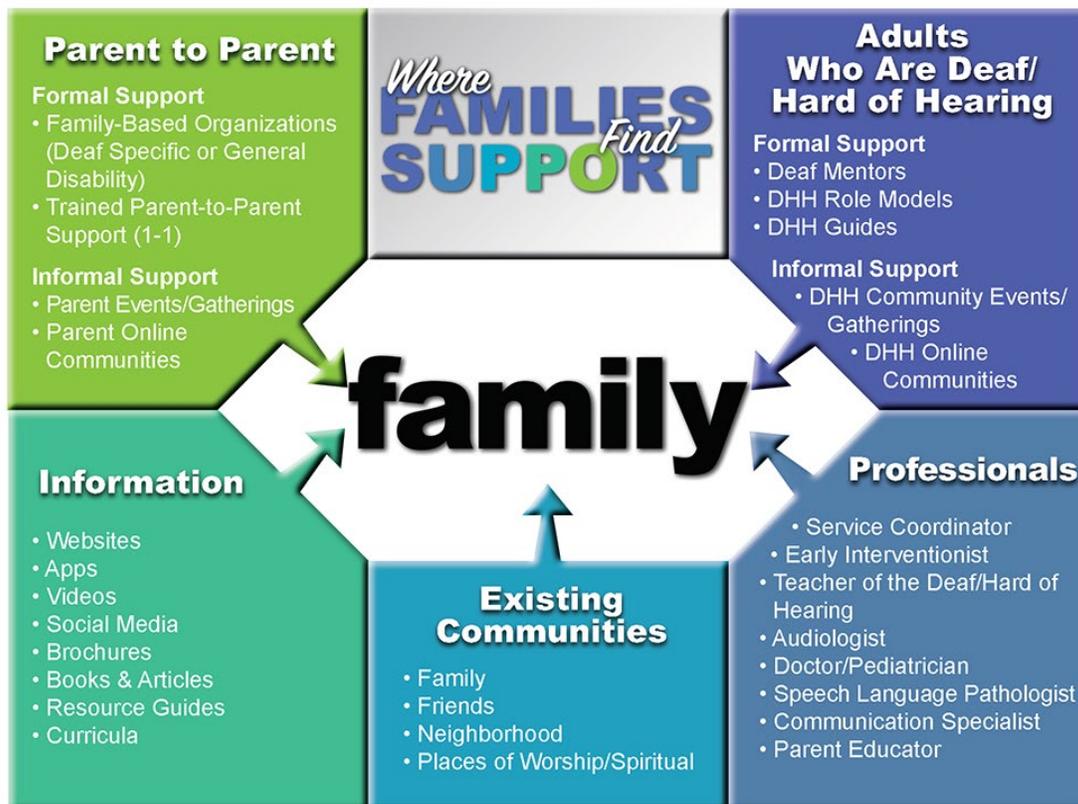
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Introduction: Creating a Culture of Support in Your Program

Why do we provide events specifically designed for families raising children who are D/HH? A thank you note from a parent who attended one such event helps answer this question:

“The first time I attended your event, I met other parents and listened to their stories. I felt complete, whole and at home. I wasn’t alone anymore. I felt the warmth of home surrounded by parents like me, experiencing the same emotions and feeling some of the same pressures. I realize now, it was an uncommon feeling to be in a room full of so many who share the common thread of the D/HH world.”

Parent support organizations who serve families with children who are D/HH can help reduce the isolation children feel when they lack exposure to other D/HH peers and adults. Parents feel encouraged when they can connect with other parents and meet D/HH adults. Whether your group decides to host a casual play date, a formal educational workshop, or a panel discussion with D/HH teens, events play an important part in helping families reach a state of empowerment and well-being that comes when they realize “we can do this!” Key predictors of well-being among parents are emotional, adaptational (adjustment and acceptance of a child’s hearing loss included) and relationship support. For children,



predictors of well-being include participation in the community, autonomy, and setting their own goals, which is also positively influenced by parent-to-parent support, which often includes events.¹

Parents all over the world find support through their own family, friends, neighborhood, faith communities, medical and educational professionals. Parents raising children with hearing loss need to look further than these typical arenas to meet other families who share the experience of deafness.

While parents may choose different methods of connecting with your program, events can reduce isolation and increase learning along with the other 1:1 outreach you might be doing. Group activities are not for everyone, so successful programs also connect families with each other virtually, individually and in group situations.

Events may be educational or social in nature or give time for both. For example, perhaps your group hosts a guest presenter, but also gives parents time to meet each other during lunch and/or breaks. Keep in mind what your end goal is and design your event with that goal in mind. Why should parents come to this event? How will they benefit? How will you know that your goals were met? These are all questions discussed in this Guide.

Event Preparation

Successful events can range dramatically from very informal gatherings to large, multiple day workshops, from virtual chats to statewide educational conferences. Regardless of the type, most successful events are planned, adequately staffed, and executed with the end goal of ensuring all participants come away with new information, a stronger network of support and excitement about attending again. The following are considerations for planning a variety of events for parents of children who are D/HH.



If you are hosting an event for the first time, you may wish to jump ahead to “A Day in the Park- With Little to No Funding” or “Virtual Chat” in the Addendum.

Event Planning Team

Pulling together a diverse team of individuals with the right mix of skills/experience, creativity, available time, and network of contacts can be useful.

- Brainstorming sessions can often be helpful as members feed off the creative energy of each other.
- A diverse team can also help ensure balance/neutrality of event content, sponsorship, volunteers etc. Do you want to attract members of a specific group to attend? Consider people on your planning committee from that group.

¹ Parent-to-Parent Support for Parents with Children Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing: A Conceptual Framework, Henderson, Johnson and Moodie, American Journal of Audiology: <http://aja.pubs.asha.org/article.aspx?articleid=1915171>

- The needs of your community and program will determine how many people should be involved with planning.

Budget

If your program has a budget and adequate funding for desired events, you are all set. However, if you need to raise funds to offer events for free or if you need to charge families to cover the cost of the event, this will take additional work and planning.



- **Keeping Costs Down:** Collaborating with other agencies, securing in-kind donations, sponsorship, individual donor campaigns, crowd-sourcing events, writing grants, charging for exhibit tables are all possible sources of funding.
- **Costs to Consider:**
 - Interpreters/transliterators/captioning
 - Foreign language interpreting
 - Location rental
 - Signage
 - Printing of handouts, event info, resources
 - Sound system purchase or rental
 - Children’s crafts/activities and supervision
 - Door prizes (baskets, shredded paper, plastic wrap, etc.)
 - Entertainer fees (balloon artist, caricature artist, etc.)
 - Gift cards for volunteers, if needed/permitted
- **Quotes/Bids:** Your program may have a requirement to get several quotes or bids for contracted services such as room rental, catering etc. This practice can help ensure the most effective use of your resources. Save the quotes/bids and document any conversations you may have for future reference and to help the next event planning team.
- **Funding Restrictions:** Federal and state funding, as well as grants, may have restrictions on what costs they will cover. At the beginning of any funding relationship, it is best to ask the funding source about any restrictions and get those limitations in writing. When there is any doubt about whether costs will be covered (for example, food/catering or tickets to an event), a discussion prior to planning the event will help make sure everyone is clear.
- **Donation Letter/Wish List:** Creating a request letter specifically for potential event funders/sponsors can be very helpful. The most flexible funding is unrestricted money that could be used for whatever cost the event team needs. However, having a “wish list” of items to fund can create ideas for potential business/organizations to consider. Here are some possible wish list items:

- Sponsor the cost of a participant's attendance
- Sponsor/provide in-kind interpreting, transliterating, or captioning
- Sponsor/donate food or cost of a reception
- Sponsor/donate printing costs
- Sponsor/donate door prizes or raffle items

Event Topic/Activities



When a group of parents come together to plan an event, share with one another what resources/events were helpful to you. Often, you can draw on the life experiences of the planning committee right from the very start of the planning process.

- **Needs Assessment/Parent Feedback:** Capitalize on any local parent feedback you already have about topics parents are interested in learning more about. Or look to other D/HH parent programs for parent input about what events they successfully executed. You could also do your own needs assessment/parent survey to gather information and ask professionals who have experience working with families. Asking for topics could be a standard part of each event evaluation survey.
- **Topics:** Children who are D/HH have very diverse needs and yet there are many areas of interest that can unite families regardless of language, communication, and educational choices. With the occurrence of D/HH already considered “low incidence,” it is often beneficial to find topics that are inclusive of all families. Finding topics of interest for the diversity of needs can be successful when targeting some of the topics below.
 - List of Successful Topics: Some successful topics have included “School Success,” “Educational Advocacy,” “Social-Emotional Development,” “Parenting,” “Literacy Development” and “Perspectives” or panels (youth/adults who are D/HH, parents, professionals, etc.)
 - Topics to Carefully Consider: Some topics may require special deliberation such as modality-specific events because it may be difficult to justify a potential perception of imbalance or favoritism. Topics for a specific level of hearing or subgroup (Down or CHARGE syndrome kids only, for example) may be confusing or not draw enough families. And in some situations, an event with a narrow focus may be very helpful. Consider running ideas by a broad range of perspectives for input and consider careful marketing to ensure balance.
- **Type of Activities:** It is wise to review any restrictions dictated by your funding source about the types of activities you are permitted to host. If your funding is from a federal or state grant and is tied to specific objectives in that grant, establishing measurable goals and objectives for your event that coordinate with those objectives is wise. See the Addendum for an example of a “Scheduling Form” that could assist with this. Social networking events may be covered; however, they may need to have adequate time for interaction between families, DHH adult role models and education about community resources. When in doubt, run ideas by your funding source for approval.

- **Titles to Attract Your Audience:** Marketing your event so that it draws the attention of parents is important. Technical titles may interest some but alienate other families. For example, “Evidence-based Research to Improve Literacy” versus “Raising Readers” has a different feel.



Thinking of the target audience, speaking to the heart and emotion of the parents who may wish to attend, and extending a warm welcome to your community can

reap rewards. Use your marketing to ask pointed questions that resonate with parents, such as a workshop about social-emotional needs of families, “Has your child felt left out at family gatherings?”, “Do you struggle to explain your child’s needs to family members?”

- **Scope of Event (Range of small/informal to large/formal):** Your budget may determine the scale of an event but do explore what your goals are for the event and how much time is needed to cover the topic and keep the audience engaged. Events with children also in attendance with provided childcare can impact how long an event is and what type of activities are offered. Is this a formal event, or informal and casual? Your team can help make decisions that feel like a good fit.

Target Audience

Some funding sources dictate the target audience, such as families with children of a certain age, while other funding provides more flexibility. Your team will want to discuss who the parents/families are that you wish to attract, whether the topic is a good fit for that audience and if the event is organized to support that targeted parent group.

Clarifying who is invited to attend an event is very helpful. If the event is parents only, you will want the information to be very clear that no childcare is provided and adults (or youth over a certain age) are welcome. If families are invited but only immediate family, you will want to be sure to indicate that.

Ethnic/Cultural/Language Diversity

When is it appropriate to offer separate events for a particular community versus ensuring families from diverse communities are welcomed and supported at events for all audiences? There are advantages to doing stand-alone events for families who communicate in the same language and have similar life experiences, such as being an immigrant. Note that your planning team would want to appoint leadership and enlist additional ad hoc members from culturally specific communities (including the Deaf community) for targeted events as well as to gain perspective for those for a general population.

Considerations

- **Where to Advertise:** How will the targeted audience or foreign language user find out about your event/where is it advertised?
- **Translations/Registration:** Is the flyer and registration translated into that language and images reflect a diverse audience? If the family is calling to register, will someone who speaks that language answer or is the voicemail message in that language/bilingual? (On the voice message, state right away that the message is bilingual, so callers do not hang up.) Whenever possible, send out written information about the event in both the target language and English.

- **Deadlines:** Flyers should include language asking participants to register by a deadline that allows for foreign language interpreters to be hired. Also, ask these participants to cancel at least 72 hours prior to the event if they are unable to attend (except of course in emergencies) so that services can be cancelled, and costs can be recouped if possible. Or perhaps your funding would allow for foreign language interpreters, in anticipation of a non-registered guest from a large cultural community to attend. These are all good issues to discuss.
- **Advertising Interpreters:** If you advertise an event as having interpreters available, you will want to provide them whether you get RSVPs or not. (Some families may not RSVP but may still want to/plan on coming.) If your funding is limited, make sure the flyer is clear that interpreters are available only with RSVP. If you need to limit attendance to immediate family members, also note that in your flyer.
- **Personal Invitations:** A personal call on phone in the parent’s native language may help families register.
- **Language Hosts:** Consider designating a “language host” for the event who will be their guide to help facilitate communication, introduce them to families, professionals etc.
- **Considerations for Translators/Interpreters:**
 - Hiring acceptably certified providers is recommended.
 - Interpreters should be knowledgeable and familiar with the vocabulary of deafness and hearing loss, as well as an understanding of Deaf/HH cultural considerations and preferably been recommended by a trusted individual/agency who can attest to their professionalism, respect for families/children who are D/HH and quality of service.
 - Volunteers should maintain the same privacy standards as a certified translator/interpreter.
 - Finding and/or paying for translators/interpreters:
 - ✓ Contact local community college/university programs for those individuals who might need community contact hours/internship/practice to volunteer.
 - ✓ Partner with agencies that have capacity to provide interpreting (i.e. schools for the Deaf, school districts, etc.) who may provide ‘in-kind’ and not charge your program.
 - ✓ When a registration fee is required for participants, incorporate the cost of foreign language interpreting in the overall budget.
 - ✓ Confirm with the agency or individual providing the interpretation prior to the event to ensure specifics; date/time/location.

Communication Access for D/HH

As a program promoting the equality of children who are deaf and hard of hearing, events are an opportunity to model how to effectively provide communication access supporting the diverse individuals who are D/HH. ASL interpreters, Cued language transliterators and captioning could be an accommodation request that a planning committee should expect. Communication access can also consume a considerable amount of a program’s budget. For most organizations, balancing the desire to provide access and limiting access to individual requests to keep budget costs lower is a reality.

Depending on an organization's resources, event planners should seek to find solutions that ensure access to the best of their ability.



- **Cost:** Consider sharing the importance of access as a budgeted item in a program's budget to funding/potential funding sources and upper management of your non-profit (if appropriate).
- In-kind donations of interpreter time by staff interpreters from partnering agencies, interpreting agencies themselves, individual interpreters are all possible sources. But consistency of access is crucial, dependency on in-kind donations may not always be possible and continual requests may not be welcomed by providers who need to earn an income.
- Working with agencies who provide these services may be wise to determine their policies about cancellations. If the budget allows, having all the appropriate access services scheduled without participants asking is ideal. Otherwise, access services provided with RSVP is acceptable. Services should be scheduled early and then could be cancelled if RSVPs do not come in requesting them.
- **Deadline:** Typically, most organizations request participants to request accommodations services by a certain date on all advertisements. These services should be ordered early and could be cancelled based on the needs of registered attendees.
- **Preparing Access Providers:** One week prior to the event, it is professional courtesy and best practice to send any agendas, handouts or list of commonly used terms for any presentations to the communication access provider so they can become familiar with the terms.
- **Consistency of Providers:** Having consistent communication access providers is helpful so they become more experienced with your services and familiar with your terminology and consumers over time.

D/HH "Plus" Considerations

Children who are deaf or hard of hearing and who also have health or additional concerns (D/HH Plus) constitute a large percentage of your potential audience (40-60%). For this reason, careful attention to event planning can create an inclusive environment for attendees. For more information, consult Hands & Voices DHH Plus Inclusion Checklist for Family-to-Family Support Programs:

<https://www.handsandvoices.org/pdf/dhhplus-inclusion-checklist.pdf>.

- **Accessible Activities:** Consider activities that will be inclusive of a wide range of children with varying abilities and anticipate needed accommodations. Be sure to promote those options.
- **"Plus" Parent Part of Planning:** Strive to have a parent(s) of a "Plus" child/adult on your Event Planning Committee or have a "Plus" parent(s) review/advise event plans as they emerge. This can help avoid issues later.

Strategic Invitations

- As your program becomes more established, consider inviting individuals who may benefit from becoming more familiar with your services, such as legislators, funders/sponsors, state agency representatives, key stakeholders, radio/newspaper/TV journalists, etc.
- If time allows, introduce these individuals to the group and give them a few moments to address the audience.
- Whenever possible, assign a trusted individual to walk through the event with these individuals so they can describe what they are seeing and can be introduced to key individuals.

Location

- **Size:** The number of participants will determine how large the accommodations will need to be. Consider if you need separate rooms for children's activities as well.
- **Safety:** Visiting the location prior to committing is always a good idea. Keep an eye out for any features that might be a safety concern such as being located near water, busy road or if there is a fence around the playground. If hosting children, are there adequate age-appropriate activities? If using technology that relies on electricity, will the equipment be safe in wet weather conditions?
- **Weather:** If you are counting on holding all or part of the event outside, have a contingency plan for inclement or severe weather. This could involve moving indoors, delaying/rearranging the schedule of events, or canceling and notifying registrants.
- **Accessibility:** Check to ensure your location has a wheelchair accessible entrance and other accommodations such as accessible bathrooms. At times you may consider hosting an event with an activity that may not be accessible to all participants, such as a roller-skating event. Discuss accommodations that could be made to adapt the activity and other ways families/children can do other activities or engage. Ensure those options fit the location.
- **Lighting and Acoustics:** Consider the need for good lighting and adequate control of sunlight (blinds, curtains etc.) for visual communication as well as good room acoustics for good auditory access.
- **Convenience:** While touring the facility, assess the parking availability and if limited, inquire if adjoining businesses may be willing to offer spots and note how you will notify volunteers/families or if signage needed. Consider locations near public transportation, like bus or light rail routes, and are easily visible and accessible. Consider locations that are central to the target population you wish to serve. For example, if your event is for a specific subpopulation of families, consider holding your event where the majority of families reside.
- **Equipment/Services:** Consider what is needed for the event, like laptop, projector, screen, microphones, sound system, Wi-Fi, etc. Will that be provided by the site as in a collaborator organization offering their equipment or will equipment need to be brought in or rented?



- **Neutrality:** Free locations like public libraries, meeting rooms at schools, or space of a collaborating partner are always helpful to your budget. If possible, strive for “neutral” locations where all families will feel comfortable. (Consider the impact on participation when hosting at a communication modality-specific or religious location.) However, there may be times when hosting an event at a particular location where parents are already comfortable gathering might be ideal, such as an event for cultural families at a cultural organization.



- **Family-Fun Attractions:** Collaborating with businesses that are already attractive to families can draw participants out, such as a children’s theatre (arrange for a presenter who discusses accessing assistive technology/requesting interpreters etc. before the show), an especially cool children’s library (librarian can explain how to get a library card in addition to D/HH expert on literacy), nature center meeting room, etc.
- **Multiple Locations:** There can be an advantage to hosting events at multiple locations at the same time to drum up interest about a “bigger” event and with the possibility of one location “streaming” the event to another location when all participants can’t be in one place. This can take more work, coordination, and technology, but could possibly reduce some cost since staff/volunteers are already providing services in one location, so adding another may prove fruitful.
- **Virtual vs. In-person:** In-person events where families can make personal connections with other families, professionals and adults who are D/HH are ideal. However, sometimes you can have a larger reach when an event is hosted through a virtual platform. Efforts can be made to create an informal, interactive discussion so parents can get valuable information from the convenience of their own home, avoiding daycare, travel time, issues with sick family members, bad weather, etc. See more information under “Virtual Chat.”

Date

- **Holidays/Religious Practices:** Having diverse members on a planning committee can assist in checking dates to ensure they do not conflict with any Holidays, religious practices or other events hosted by other organizations targeting the same population.
- **Recurring Event:** If you hope for this event to happen each year, try to pick a date that families can plan around. For example, host an annual family picnic on the first Thursday in August.
- **Conflicts:** Try to avoid holding a new event on the same date or too close in proximity to other D/HH events in your community.

Time/Length

- **Convenient Time:** Consider a time of day that may be most convenient for families to attend and most productive for your event. Avoiding mealtime can reduce your cost but may also decrease participation. If an event is geared towards young children, considerations for nap time, feedings, and attention span or stamina of the parents is wise. Also consider the impact of rush hour or other traffic issues of neighboring events in the area.

- **Cultural Needs:** Certain times of day may involve provision of accommodations for religious needs, such as a private place for prayer at certain times of day.
- **Overnight:** Special considerations for overnight/camp/retreat-- see special section

Ensuring Unbiased Delivery of Information and Balance

The responsibility for providing unbiased, balanced information at your event is an ongoing process requiring evaluation and diligence. As mentioned earlier, the topic chosen is key, as are the presenters, volunteers, adult role models and information provided. Having good representation on your planning committee will help avoid issues. However, experience with implementing your event and getting feedback from diverse perspectives will also be helpful. Reach out to organizations who represent a certain vantage point for guidance if you are concerned about a particular aspect of your event.

Presenter Selection and Prep

Extending invitations to presenters whom planning team members have already seen present and are familiar with engaging in with an audience of families with D/HH children is helpful.

- Even still, meeting with presenters to go over the goals of the event, the audience they will be presenting to and sensitivities to be aware of, and the need to be respectful of all family choices is beneficial for the presenter, audience, and your program.
- Giving the presenter the exact agenda with time allotments, including breaks for communication access providers, etc. is also important.
- Meeting with a presenter just before going on to ensure they are aware of any last-minute adjustments to the schedule, any new sensitivities in the audience (brand new or emotional parent, for example) can also help.

Volunteers



Volunteers can play a very important part in the success of your events. For organizations that are an all-volunteer organization, and/or with very limited staff time, consideration must also be given to the planning committee participants to keep things within the capacity of that group to implement the event.

- **Application:** Having a volunteer application can aid in sorting through candidates and separate out those who vaguely “want to spend time with deaf/hard of hearing kids” from those who have the motivation to complete the application. What experience do they have with children and families? What is their professional background? Can they respect the diversity of families you serve? Can they provide references for volunteer work they have done or have they been referred to you by a trusted source?
- **Balance:** You will also want to assess the balance of the volunteers you have for any one event. For example, if all your volunteers are signing Deaf adults or D/HH adults who all use listening and spoken language, what message might a family get about your program? Scout troops, National Honors Society students, D/HH student programs, religious or business organizations,

can be helpful in sending volunteers, but those who are themselves D/HH or have proficiency in the communication modes (including foreign language) of your attendees are like gold.

- **In-Person Meeting:** Meeting with all volunteers prior to events, whether in person or by video conference or phone helps to clarify expectations and duties.
- **On-going Support:** Repeat volunteerism should be encouraged, and certificates of attendance for anyone needing to document hours and volunteer appreciation events can also keep volunteers interested in returning.
- **Number of Volunteers:** You will need to determine how many people you will need to run the event. An event as small as 20 people requires several individual volunteer roles. Some possible needs:
 - Volunteer Coordinator
 - 1-2 people at the registration table
 - 1-2 people in the event room welcoming and getting everyone situated
 - 1-3 people to manage the flow of events: timekeeping
 - 1 person who can be the point of contact for the event site
 - Presenters and panelists could be volunteer roles if you are seeking them
 - Food/Beverage hosts (like a large picnic)
 - People for children’s activities, when applicable
 - Photographer
 - Cultural Hosts
 - “VIP” Hosts
- **Communication:** Clear and consistent communication with volunteers prior to the event can keep them engaged and increase the chances they will attend. Consider having a checklist of duties for recurring events such as an annual family conference or picnic. Free electronic tools for volunteer management/communication such as “SignUpGenius” can take care of some of the details of volunteers. Contact volunteers prior to the event with details such as: arrival time, what to wear/bring, length of volunteer shift, expectations, important cell phone numbers, rules/policies etc.

D/HH Adult Role Models

Whenever possible, having diverse adults who are D/HH at your events provides opportunities for parents, caregivers, siblings, and children who are D/HH to engage with adults in a casual environment.

- **Preparation:** It is important the role models are carefully prepared to engage with diverse families who have made a variety of choices that may differ from those of the role model(s). Role models should focus on positive life experiences and avoid sharing negative information or

stories that may be taken as trying to influence a parent’s decision for their child. You may even wish to develop volunteer training.

- **Purpose:** D/HH Adult Role Models can be infused in your events either simply as volunteers or even better, to purposefully engage parents and their children in conversation, first connecting on common ground (we both like the same sports team, pointing to a sweatshirt) but then leading to conversations about the role models own personal experiences that might be helpful for the parents to know.
- **Engage Programs:** Your community may have a formal program such as a Deaf Mentor or D/HH Guide or Role Model program to collaborate with on events. Consider tapping into these resources to the extent that your organizations share similar goals.

Safety

The safety of everyone at an event is paramount. Following the “Kidpower ‘Safety Promise’² or, “I will put the safety and well-being of myself and others ahead of anyone’s embarrassment, inconvenience, or offense.” In other words, plan for safety. The safety of the children our program serves should be carefully considered throughout all planning. For more information, consult the Hands & Voices Parent Safety Toolkit: <https://www.handsandvoices.org/pdf/OUR-Toolkit.pdf> and the Safety Policy template in the addendum section of this guide.

- **Location:** Childcare should happen in the same building as parents with an “open door” policy for parents to observe. In some cases, this is a requirement for activities approved without a childcare license.
- **Providers:** If licensed childcare providers are possible, an organization should use those. If not, an experienced adult who has cared for children should lead the childcare activities and volunteers/paid staff. Teachers can often be great collaborators and volunteers in consulting with your planned activity person. Volunteers, staff, and attendees should know about policies about drug/alcohol use.
- **Volunteer Requirements/Rules:**
 - Background checks are recommended for all volunteers, including family members of staff, board members, collaborators, etc. (Frequency of the checks may depend on your program’s policies and practices.)
 - If volunteers are known to work for agencies that require background checks, confirming this with those partner organizations may reduce the cost to your organization.
 - Consider developing a signed agreement for all volunteers that would include practices such as never being alone with a minor child or adult with a guardian, never give food to a child without explicit permission of the parent/guardian (food allergies) and diaper changing/toileting should be done by the parent/guardian, not staff or volunteers. See example of this in the Addendum section of this guide.

² Kidpower Protection Promise: <https://www.kidpower.org/kidpower-protection-promise/>

- Orientation prior to the event is also recommended, if possible. If not possible, the day of the event, prior to the start to remind everyone of safety practices. Refer to any policies and practices of collaborators or organizations/agencies funding the events.
- With concern for the health of all participants, it is important to stress that volunteers who are feeling unwell or have had a recent illness that they have not fully recovered from should be encouraged to stay home.
- A plan of how to respond if rules/policies are broken or an incident occurs is very helpful, including who makes decisions about contacting parents, or if need be, safety officials.
- **Ratios:** Adult to child ratios should follow the community standard. There should be enough adults so that a child is never alone with one adult. If a child must use the restroom or change clothes, more than one adult should be present if the privacy of the child cannot be assured.
- **Registration:** Registration for children should include any communication, food, equipment or other precautions/needs important for caregivers to know.
- **Participant Behavior:** If minors are participating in an event on-line, consider sharing your expectations about on-line behavior. See an example of an Internet Safety Pledge in the Addendum of this Guide.
- **Activities:** Activities should have the appropriate leadership and expertise. Get a lifeguard for swimming, etc.
- **Age Limit:** Older children may not be a good fit for “childcare” and a firm cutoff in age for childcare (including volunteers) should be publicly stated prior. Older children could perhaps attend the session with their parents.
- **Liability insurance:** Each organization’s governing body should make the decision about liability risks to the organization. Insurance for events is recommended and a clear understanding of what is covered or not is best to know before any plans are settled.



Collaboration

Collaboration with professionals, other programs/organizations/agencies is always beneficial to generate more ideas and tap more financial and person-power resources. For newer programs,



collaborations can be pivotal for events to occur. Regular planning meetings to discuss all the many components of an event, clearly established action items and responsibilities for partners can keep planning on track and create smooth event execution.

Food/Beverage

The time of day and length of your event will impact whether to provide food and beverage and what kind. Also, check whether the location you are using has restrictions on outside food or a list of approved caterers. Your organization may have rules about potlucks or people bringing home cooked meals so it is good to check. Your funding source may have rules about what they will pay for so it is also

good to know that before getting started. The event planning team will need to decide what is appropriate for the event and what the budget will allow.

- **Type of/Care of Food:** Look for food appropriate for the audience you hope to attract. Is it kid-friendly? How will it be refrigerated or kept frozen, if necessary? Do you provide vegetarian, gluten-free, vegan or food in keeping with certain religious practices? How will you be made aware of participants' food allergies? How will you let participants know of the content of food for those with dietary restrictions? Will you have plenty of water for outdoor events in hot weather? Planning for how food will be stored before, who will serve it and how it will be handled when the event is over is wise. Information about food on the event flyer/advertising is helpful and asking participants to RSVP can be very helpful to secure the right quantity/provide the right number of people to a caterer.
- **Catering:** Caterers will have a deadline for knowing the number of people in attendance. You will want to make calculations for possible "no-shows" and people who may come without registering. If using a caterer, you will want to clarify set-up and if you or they will be providing paper products, serving utensils, etc.

Flyer

Not all events require a flyer, but they can be very helpful to summarize your event and interest your audience.

- **Information to Include:** Clear, concise, and accurate information conveyed in a fun way (when appropriate), highlighting what families will get in return for their time investment is ideal. Photos/graphics are often eye catching and should be inclusive of a diverse audience (culturally, gender, D/HH Plus, communication/technology) whenever possible. It is helpful for the layout/look of your flyers to match your organization so that parents can easily identify who is hosting and what to expect.
- **Timing:** Ideally, from one to three months of repeated promotion in a variety of ways may be necessary for parents to register/attend. The longer the time commitment (as in the case of an overnight or weekend event), the better. It is never too early to post a "save the date". In fact, having a yearlong calendar of events pre-planned can often help parents anticipate the type of events and work around the dates you set.
- **Deadline:** If you require a deadline to register, ensure this is emphasized prominently on your flyer as well as in your communications.

Registration Prior to Event: (Email, on-line, app etc.)

It is often helpful for planning purposes to have participants register prior to attending an event, especially one where the number of attendees will greatly impact decisions about staffing, food ordered, room size, and other decisions.

- **Registration Options:**
 - Email/call a specific contact/volunteer.

- Complete a registration form, such as a Google Form.
- Follow a link to an event technology platform, such as Eventbrite.
- Create an event on social media, such as Facebook.
- **Information Needed:** Food allergies or the communication needs of children can also be documented.
- **Communication with Registrants:** Event registration apps can not only be very helpful in gathering the necessary information, but also can send confirmation of the registration, event details, and periodic reminders about the event.

Increasing Parent Attendance After Registering

There is always some attrition with the number of registrants for any event. Here are some strategies to increase attendance:

- Send reminders asking registrants to notify you if not attending so the spot could be provided to another family.
- Give away a free item (like an educational advocacy book, etc.) to registered attendees and use this in marketing.
- Confirm/remind registration by email or phone.
- Provide raffle/door prizes that are given at the end of the event.
- Give specific attendees a small role at the event itself.

Collecting Fees/Payment

Consider the pros and cons of collecting a small fee versus hosting a “free” event. A small fee helps to ensure attendance and reduces costs, while a free event may encourage people to come without indicating an “RSVP” or to “RSVP” but not show up. How will funds be charged? Ahead of time or at the door? If free, attendance should still be taken.

Advertising/Social Media

Social media can be an excellent way to advertise events, especially when you have a very strong social media presence and parent engagement. You may also find advertising via email, encouraging school programs (especially those for students who are D/HH) to send home flyers in student backpacks, contacting other collaborative partners, and social media sharing complements your advertising efforts. Images of past similar events can be helpful and should reflect the diversity of attendees you wish to engage.

Packing for Off Site Events

Consider having a checklist of items needed for off-site events and packaging them well in advance so nothing is missed. Updating this list after each event, if recurring, makes future events run more smoothly.

Event Execution

Signage

Signage identifying the event is always good to have. Nothing is worse than a family or volunteer arriving late and frustrated because they didn't know where to go.

- **Location:** Where signs are posted depends on the event and location. If you are hosting a small parent event in a library for instance, then signage would only need to direct the family to the registration table. Arrow signs at the front doors and at any turn that must be taken to make it to the registration table.
- **Information:** Signs could include your organization logo or name, the event name and what is at the end of the arrow. For instance, at the front door post an arrow that points up (enter the door) and on the sign your logo or name could appear and “_____conference/event” listed.
- **Graphic:** Consider making the signage connect with the theme of the event. For instance, if your logo is a ship, you could cut out some cartoon ships, laminate them and tape them to the sidewalk leading the way to the event.
- **Parking:** If the event is larger, your group may want to consider street signage. This could be a sign that says “parking for _____ conference/event” with an arrow. At times ground signage is appropriate to lead attendees down a path.
- **Acknowledgements:** Discuss having signage at the event that lists the sponsors and supporters of the event.

Volunteer Management

Ensuring volunteers enjoy their experience and contribute to the overall success and enjoyment of your attendees is critical. They become an extension of your organization/staff.

- **Volunteer Coordinator/Check-in:** Especially for larger events, having one person appointed to the management of volunteers can make the event run more efficiently. Having a place for the volunteers to meet/check-in can also be helpful.
- **Orientation:** Individual orientation as each volunteer arrives can work or you may find it more efficient to have a short meeting for everyone. Remember to plan for communication access, as needed.

- **Appreciation:** Consistently and sincerely thanking each volunteer and making them feel valued and appreciated will help keep them engaged. A shout out during announcements is always a great touch.
- **Certificate of Attendance:** Some volunteers may need a certificate of attendance with the number of hours they served so having those available the day of the event can avoid having to mail them later or it may be easier to mail them out with a thank you following the event.
- **Breaks:** If you have a long event, let your volunteers know how to take breaks (find a replacement) or when to eat (prior or after the event if not possible during).

Equipment Set-Up

If not hiring this service through the location, the day of your event strive to have two people who are experienced with using/setting up/troubleshooting any technology or equipment you are using. Have these individuals arrive at an appointed time to ensure any issues are worked out well before the program is scheduled to start.

Attendee Check-in

Attendee Check-in: The check-in process of an event can make or break the outcome and satisfaction of your attendees. If a family must wait for a long time for a disorganized check-in process, they have already had a negative experience before they even get into the event. Making sure the process is streamlined and you are prepared (i.e., someone who comes who isn't registered, someone who comes who needs an interpreter but didn't request one, etc.) It can be helpful if attendees already received a detailed confirmation of their registration, including directions to the on-site registration, such as:

- Outside the conference room
- In the hallway near a classroom
- Just inside your assigned room. A check-in table could include the following:
 - Sign-In Sheet: If not collected prior, provide a sign-in sheet at the event to collect contact information and attendance numbers. If collected prior, create some process to check off registered guests who have come to the event. Tracking attendance helps to expand your contacts and report back to funders/supporters. Some programs have access to technology (tablets) for this purpose.
 - Name Tags/Pens: If possible, pre-printed name tags speed up the registration process. If possible, include the city of residence on nametags so families can make connections. Otherwise, families may need space to write on blank name tags.
 - Release of Information/Photo and/or Video Release Form: If capturing any video, photos, or quotes from event participants, a form like this should be used. Some programs may have a photo release signed by family members for a specified period of time covering all events. More often a form is created for each event. This form can be individual (where each family signs names on one sheet), or it can be one sheet for the entire event where each participant

will write and sign their name. The specifics of the event should be included on the release and how/where/for how long/for what purpose you may use their personal photo, quote, or video. An example of a release form can be found at the end of this Event Guide. You may consider a way to flag the participants who do not wish to have their photo taken like color coded name tags or wrist bands. Photographers should also ask permission when possible. If this can be done prior to the event or through technology, again, this can speed up the process.

- Event Flyers: Any upcoming event flyers you wish to share can be displayed, including your own or other events that may interest attendees.
- Merchandise: Check to make sure merchandise sales are permissible at the location you are using. If so, have a plan for keeping money safe, using staff or volunteers who have been oriented in cash, credit card and recordkeeping for sales.
- Membership Info: If your group offers memberships, consider a “special offer”. Offering a discounted membership price could help increase your member numbers. Display signage about this to interest current attendees.

Communication Access (D/HH and Foreign Language)

- **Communication Ground Rules**: To ensure your program is considered fair and accessible, it is important at the beginning of every event to spell out the rules regarding communication access. Consider using/handing out ***Communication Access Considerations by H & V***.³
- **Deaf/HH Individual Needs**: Those who request accommodations know their needs best. Give the individuals who are D/HH time to share their preferences and work together to best meet the needs of all in attendance.
- **Room layout**: Does the room allow for visual access for all participants? Good acoustics and lighting? Seating arrangements will differ based on the type of activities offered. A panel of D/HH adults will want to see each other. A workshop where small group interactions are planned may have tables and chairs facing the presenters, for example. Whenever possible, arranging seating so participants can see one another (horseshoe) is beneficial. Interpreters and transliterators can be helpful in room layout/set-up and access provider placement.
- **Captioning**: Captioning should be accessible to those who need it. Where the captions appear (top or bottom of a screen with a presentation, or on a second screen), will need to be decided. If hosting only one user, captioning could appear on an individual monitor for that specific person.
- **Microphone Use**: For communication access to be optimized, participants may need to be reminded to always use a microphone (especially in the case of remote captioning), pause and check in with any interpreters, and use Communication Ground Rules. Someone on site could monitor access at all times.

³ Communications Considerations: <http://www.handsandvoices.org/comcon/>

- **Foreign Language Interpreters:** When providing foreign language interpreters, consider where the participants will be seated in proximity to the interpreter(s) and how those spoken conversations may impact the acoustics of the participants around them. In some cases, renting or borrowing headsets so the interpreter is fed the auditory information, translates it and then sends the language directly to participants through headsets works best and is least disruptive.
- **Cultural Considerations:** For families from cultural communities, providing accommodations for their cultural or religious needs is important. Some participants may need a private area to pray at sunrise and sunset, while other participants may not shake hands between unmarried people.
- Diverse representation of planning committee members/advisors/collaborators can be very helpful in this area.

Social Media Posts During Event/Photography



A great way to make your group visible and appealing to others is to show what events you host. Posting on social media the day before and the day of the event is very effective.

- Make certain you have received photo releases from anyone who is in an image you are going to share. It is important to follow those rules you have set out for release, including checking for any established indicator that someone does not wish to be photographed, as previously discussed.
- Consider setting up a “Selfie Station” with cute props or “frames” for photos and provide a hashtag where parents can post their own photos.

Food Coordination

- **Management:** If using caterers, this is their responsibility unless noted in your contract. Otherwise, designating one or more people not part of facilitating the program to set up, restock and clean up food served during the event is important.
- **Hygiene/Care:** Reminders about good personal hygiene and any need to keep food separate (dietary or religious need) as well as what to do with trash and leftover food is also helpful. Consideration of clear face masks and gloves for volunteers, as well as announcements about use of hand sanitizer can be helpful.

Children’s and Adult Activities

- **Facilitator:** Appoint a facilitator or assign the responsibility to a team, outlining who is responsible for what duties. The individuals need to be experienced or trained in managing the event, being careful to attend to any comments made by any presenter or participant that may be potentially misunderstood by attendees, such as comments of bias or negative comments about a particular person, agency, or organization.
- **Timekeeping:** When possible, a separate person or person(s) should be responsible for timekeeping and ensuring the program tracks according to the plan for the day, allowing for enough time for Q&A from participants (if applicable) and for evaluations, if being done on site.

- **Announcements:** Housekeeping items can be as simple as the washroom locations or a run-through of the agenda; however, they should also include ground rules. It should be stated from the very beginning that this event is a safe place, that everyone should feel comfortable. You as the host need to be prepared for if something happens that makes a guest feel unwelcome. Letting everyone know what the ground rules are up front and that you want to be notified if anything makes a participant uncomfortable mitigates issues that may come up.



- **Introductions:** It is especially important to have an opportunity for everyone to introduce themselves; this allows connections to be made. To welcome everyone, clarify the introduction process and emphasize the respect for each other's individual journeys. Provide a presentation slide with questions that each participant will use to guide them through their introduction. Possible questions:
 - "What is your name?"
 - "Where do you live?"
 - "Who are you here for?"
 - "What do you hope to gain from this event?"
 - "In one minute (someone must time each participant) tell us the story of why you are here today."
- **Consider Icebreaker Introductions:** Ask participants to partner up, preferably with someone unfamiliar. Each person will have 10 minutes to answer a series of questions about their partner. This is a win-win as it gets people more comfortable with each other and will not lead into one person's two-hour story. They could answer questions presented on a slide OR you could hand out half sheets of paper with questions, so they have a place to take notes. After 10 minutes each person will introduce their partner. This also makes any bias a bit more difficult to push.
- **Other Ice Breakers:** What better way to get to know one another than a little bit of fun? Many websites provide great ideas on icebreakers for all different sized groups. These can be very good for relationship building and for an organization to get a snapshot of who their audience is. Ice breakers create a positive atmosphere, help people relax, motivate, break down social barriers and allow attendees to get to know one another. Some ideas are:
 - "Have You Ever" or "Would You Rather"
 - "Two Truths and a Lie"
 - "Candy Questions"
- **Main Program:** Having a theme for the event can be fun and a way to link the adult activities to the children's activities. Presenters and volunteers can be included on the "theme." For example, if the event is about literacy, people could dress up as their favorite storybook character, decorations and even paper products could all be connected to the theme. Have fun!
- **Time Management:** It is best to stay true to the scheduled time for sessions, respecting other sessions happening after, parents who need to get children from childcare and the schedules of

communication access providers. The facilitator can use strategies such as warning the audience there is only time for one more question or that the question asked will be the last. Share ways presenters can be contacted, if possible.

- **Wrap-Up:** Ensure the participants, volunteers, communication access providers, and participants are warmly thanked for attending and encouraged to provide feedback and to attend future events.

Contingency Plans/Emergency Considerations

Contingency Plans/Emergency Considerations: Running through potential contingency and emergency plans prior to the event is recommended. This may include what happens and who makes the decision to cancel an event due to weather or some other unforeseen last-minute need.

- Have a plan for how to contact attendees quickly using social media, cell phone contacts for attendees, staff, communication providers and volunteers.
- Several people should have the emergency contact information for the facility itself in case of any issues or needs.

Payment of Contracted Services

Payment of Contracted Services: Some contractors may expect payment on the day of the event so have those payments ready. Otherwise, let the contractors know in advance how to submit their hours or whom to connect with after their shift has ended.

On-Site Survey

- Surveys provide your organization with information to help make each event better than the one before. It allows you to fill gaps in programming that you didn't even know existed. It is important to have closing remarks whenever possible. Bring everyone back together and thank them for coming. Tell them you need them to complete a short survey and how you will use the survey responses.
- Make surveys short and easy to follow. Yes or no questions can be used but don't always get you the results you are seeking. You want to know their thoughts on the organization of the day, the value of the event (this could be monetary or time-based value), would they come again, would they tell others about the event, what could be better and what was their favorite thing. These are good questions that can prompt ideas from your consumers, which is always helpful for future planning.

Event Follow Up

Appreciation

Thanking the sponsors and volunteers who assisted with an event is not only good manners; it builds the possibility of more successful events in the future. A simple card or email may be enough; your budget

may not allow a small gift card or other recognition. Share a warm letter of thanks with one or two event pictures and a brief explanation of the impact it had on families. Consider hosting an annual “Volunteer Appreciation” event, perhaps at one of your organization’s Board/Advisory meetings. Consider posting their photo, with permission, on social media or in another communication outlet for your program.

Public Posting of Event Summary

For large events, it may be appropriate to share a press release or other public posting. You might include the purpose, the sponsors, the number of attendees, and a brief summary of the impact. Again, pictures or video are always helpful to tell the story of your event and your organization. Be sure you have permission to use the photographs you wish to share.

Timely Follow-up

Each event is an opportunity to ask participants for more information, to be added to a mailing list, or to connect again. Follow up quickly with whomever or what has been promised, and if it’s not possible to answer a question on the spot, be honest and ask if you can share the question with a larger network of people.

Project Management/Documentation

Once a successful event is over, organizing the information about preparation, implementation, follow-up is wise so as to more easily host this event in the future, especially in the event of staff/volunteer turnover. Creating checklists, spreadsheets and/or using a project management tool can aid in creating timelines for when certain tasks need to take place.

Event Evaluation/Reporting

Event Evaluations

Surveys let you know how participants benefited from the event and what worked well. Evaluations can also provide ideas about what to host next.

- Surveys can be given at the end of an event for the highest turn-in rate or sent out after an event if you have collected good contact information. (See example in the Addendum).
- Attendees could be asked to rate how satisfied they were with the location, program, and opportunity to meet other families, and what they would be interested in learning or doing next time. Including questions about the impact of the event on the parent’s ability to become educated about D/HH issues, how to advocate for their child, or realistic expectation for their child can provide important information.
- If it’s appropriate and especially for multiple parent education trainings, consider having attendees complete pre- and post-event surveys with the same questions to track the growth of their knowledge.

Debrief

Schedule a time to debrief with your planning team shortly following your experience. While the event is fresh in your mind is the best time to discuss what went well, what could be improved, and what should be on your “list of must-dos” for next time.

Items for Discussion:

- Did the event achieve the goals sought?
- Repeat the event?
- What components should continue?
- What needs improvement?
- Feedback (Volunteer, Staff, Participants, Collaborators)
- Information to document for next time?

Going over a summary of the participant evaluations can be helpful for your discussions and making improvements for the next event or next year’s event, if this is recurring.

Reporting

An event report should be shared with your Board, funders/sponsors/collaborators, reported at EHDI Advisory meetings or at other relevant opportunities. Emphasize how their investment/support of the event had an impact with quotes from parents, kids, and volunteers. Photos always leave an impression. Data for consideration:

- Number and diversity of attendees
- Number and diversity of volunteers
- Age range of children (where applicable)
- Number of first-time attendees
- Satisfaction survey/impact results
- Parent knowledge growth (If pre and post tests were given)
- Key take-aways
- Plans for next year or next event

Specific Event Considerations



“Day in the Park – With Little to No Funding”

- **Overview:** Creating events for families with children who are deaf and hard of hearing can sometimes feel like a big undertaking. It doesn’t have to be. Here are some simple steps to

consider when trying to bring parents together to network with each other and in the process, learn more strategies to support their own child.

- **Hosting:** Your parent support program could host an event, or you could encourage other parents to host and empower them to take ownership. Consider sharing this Guide with the parents as a reference.
- **Collaboration:** Collaboration with other parent organizations, professionals and state agencies is always a good idea, and especially while beginning to offer activities for parents. Consider partnering with teacher of the D/HH, local school districts, audiologists, social service agencies, public health, Parent Training Institute or family-based organizations, advocacy centers, Deaf Mentor, or adult role model programs, etc. Also consider help from organizations outside the field of deafness such as Girl and Boy Scout troops, service organizations, local businesses, and professional organizations (Chambers etc.)
- **Location:** If this is truly an outdoor event at a park or playground, have an alternative plan in case of bad weather. Does this location also have an indoor facility, shelter for rain, etc.? Or will you have a rain date and how will your participants be notified of cancellation, postponement or change of venue? Things to think about.
- **Activities/Education:** Even if this is a very simple event, having some educational component is a good goal. Encourage activities for the kids that are fun and engaging but also emphasize some skill-building. Arts and crafts (face painting, selfie station) and sports equipment can be simple solutions. Ask for volunteers to lead the activities. Whenever possible, invite guests who are themselves D/HH and introduce them to the audience or consider having an information table where guests can share information about their program or services.
- **Food:** To keep costs down, ask for donations from local businesses or consider having a potluck. Asking for labels of ingredients can help those with food allergies or religious needs to avoid certain foods.
- **Seek Input:** Consider preparing a simple, short evaluation for attendees to do before they leave. If possible, ask for volunteers to host the next event.
- **Thank You:** Be sure to acknowledge anyone helping with or donating to the event during the event. If you can offer even a small gift to the host, do. Always a nice touch to follow up after the event with the numbers of participants and a photo that participants have given permission to share.

Virtual Chat (Facebook, Zoom or another platform)



- Bring in individuals with experience hosting a virtual chat.
- Keep a social media chat session (such as Facebook) to less than a ½ hour but more than 10 minutes. You need to let the event populate into participant's feeds so that they will see it and start to interact. More than 30 minutes people may lose interest which then could keep people from attending them in the future.

- Acknowledge participants as you see them “join” – it helps them feel included and committed to staying. Keep in mind if you use a platform like zoom to broadcast into a social channel media you won’t see people joining.
- The person going “live” needs to have access to the page to start the live session from the page. If you are bringing on a guest presenter Facebook has a “add a speaker” option to the live feed which kind of gives you a “picture in picture” look. Consider creating a private group on Facebook to practice going live and bringing on guest presenters to work out any issues without being seen by the public.
- If you wish to appoint someone who is not an administrator of the page to be the guest presenter and don’t wish to add them in via Facebook for the “picture in picture” look, then you may want to get a subscription to a virtual video platform (such as Zoom) that will allow you to broadcast the presentation to social media.
- Feel free to engage participants by responding to comments (facilitator or another appointed person can do this if this is too much to manage for the facilitator).
- Ask participants questions and ask them to give a “thumbs up” (“like”) or “heart” if they have experienced something that was shared. On Facebook, icons will float up on the screen so people watching the replay later will be enticed to watch, wanting to know the reason why people gave so many ‘thumbs up’ or “hearts.” Likewise, if interaction is slow to start, you may want to “plant” a few planned participants to comment to get things started until other participants feel comfortable enough to interact. It can be awkward to be live and not “see” the other participants. With that said, the facilitator should be energetic and able to engage the audience knowing that they will have limited live feedback from participants.
- Advertise going “live” at a specific date/time so your audience can plan their attendance.
- Videoconferencing platforms (like Zoom) work well for smaller groups (maximum 15 to 20). When the group gets too large, it can be difficult to manage, and using a second facilitator can be helpful to track participant “chats” and video/audio input. Using interpreters or transliterators can make the facilitation more challenging as diverse participants may have different needs for access, but face to face interaction has many benefits. You often can have a free account but check as to time limits depending on the number of participants. To go “live” to social media, you may need to have the paid webinar platform. Often you can contact a rep for free to have them show you the basics and your options based on how you plan to utilize the platform.

Panel Facilitation

Hosting a panel of parents, professionals, teens, or adults who are D/HH can be an effective way to help parents (and professionals) understand and respect the rich diversity of perspectives in our community. Panels often are the most highly rated/popular part of an event. To ensure the panel is balanced, the information honors the many possible choices families can make, and the audience has a positive experience, careful attention in planning and execution is necessary. Here are suggestions to help create a successful panel:

- **Panel Goals/Theme:**
 - Determine what you want the audience to learn from the panel. What are the goals of the event? For attendees to meet inspiring D/HH individuals/teens, diverse families, various professionals, dads, or siblings? Consideration of these factors will help in determining the panelists and facilitator.

- **Choosing Panelists:**
 - Once the goal/theme and type of panel is decided, panelists who embody the theme and whose stories support the goals can be invited.
 - Although communication modality, technology choice and educational placement are not the focus of panels, striving to have panelists who represent a wide range of experiences helps audience members relate. This also underscores the idea that children who are D/HH can achieve success through many paths. Try to recruit panelists who are diverse in terms of mode/method of communication, gender, ethnicity, level of hearing, socio-economic background, cultural background, and educational placement, etc.
 - It is critical that panelists share their personal information respectfully to a diverse audience, so inviting panelists who have demonstrated this ability is a good place to start. (Looking for new potential panelists for future opportunities will keep repeat panel offerings fresh.)
 - Ask each panelist how they will receptively and expressively communicate. This may influence decisions to invite other panelists and will assist in ensuring appropriate access.

- **Choosing a Panel Facilitator:**
 - Be sure the facilitator has a strong foundation and respect for unbiased support of families to avoid any preferential treatment of a panelist/family choice. Preferably, the facilitator has experience with panels and has knowledge of the panel theme. They will also want to be prepared for possible issues that may arise and be prepared to handle them delicately.

- **Establishing Questions:**
 - Focusing on the desired outcomes of the panel will help in creation of questions that will draw out relevant and impactful stories from the panelists.
 - Consider using “tried and true” questions from past panels or consider asking help from several people with experience attending, participating on, or facilitating other panels.

- **Sample Questions for Parent Panels:**
 - What surprised you most about raising a D/HH child?
 - If applicable, describe the dynamics between hearing and D/HH siblings?
 - What worked well socially for your child, and is there anything you wish you could have improved socially for them?

- **Sample Questions for Panels of Teens or Adults Who Are D/HH:**
 - What did your parents do that was helpful?
 - How would you answer this question: “People would be surprised to know that I...”
 - Best advice for parents
- **Sample Questions for Professional Panels:**
 - What’s the toughest question parents ask you? And your answer?
 - Tell something that you learned from a family.
 - Has your perspective on this field changed in any way? Explain.
- **Planning the Schedule:**
 - It is helpful to calculate how much time you will have for the following:
 - ✓ Introductions
 - ✓ Planned questions
 - ✓ Audience Q&A
 - ✓ Wrap-Up
 - For example, if you have an hour for your panel, plan several minutes to welcome the panelists and audience and provide audience guidelines for how questions will be answered. Allow at least 10 to 15 minutes for audience Q & A. The remaining time will be for the scheduled questions. Calculating the approximate time per question per panelist ahead of time can be helpful in gauging the number of questions you can ask and how the panel is tracking while being facilitated.
- **Orientation for Panelists and Facilitator:**
 - Before the panel event, plan an orientation for the panelists, such as a short video chat reminding them of the guidelines and go through some possible questions.
 - Let the panelists know the theme and goals for the panel discussion. Also, let them know what the panel is not about.
 - Make sure the panelists and facilitator have the questions ahead of time and consider sending guidelines for how to phrase answers that are respectful of a diverse audience.
 - Go over the recommended time length for each answer, asking for the panelists’ help to preserve equal time for their fellow panelists. Share how much time you have for Q&A. New facilitators may want to ask panelists for short answers to the questions to prepare.
- **Facilitation:**
 - To ensure each panelist and audience member is respected, facilitators listen carefully, keep an eye on audience reactions, and actively promote equitable participation by all panelists (and audience members as appropriate). New facilitators can have support from someone in

the audience to cue the facilitator that a panelist or audience member has had enough time, that there is a question/comment in the back of the room or that time is running out.

- The facilitator may have to draw comments out of a panelist who gives short answers, repeats what another panelist says or does not provide an answer. The facilitator will want to strive for as equal participation time for each panelist as possible to provide balance.
 - It is often best practice to maintain possession of a microphone and hold it for an interpreter or audience member while they ask their question so the facilitator can interrupt an audience member or panelist, as necessary.
 - Sometimes a comment made by a panelist or audience member can make someone else uncomfortable. A strategy to avoid is to act preemptively in the introduction. Example: “Welcome to (title) I’m (facilitator’s name) with (organization). Our goal at this event is to learn more from one another, and for everyone to go away from here feeling supported and uplifted. If a comment or issue comes up that makes you uncomfortable, I want to assure you that it is not our intention. We respect everyone’s point of view, and if we’ve missed the mark for you in some way today, I hope you’ll let us know how we can do a better job for you next time.” If a comment does occur, the facilitator will be expected to address it both publicly (gently) and privately with the individuals making or taking offense, if possible.
- **Managing Question & Answer Time:**
 - Questions can be handled by having the audience ask directly or the audience could write down questions on notecards that are handed to someone who makes decisions which to ask and how to ask them.
 - If the audience can ask questions directly of the panelists, the facilitator may have to intercede if a question/comment is not balanced or respectful. Also, the facilitator may need to invite a question directed at only one panelist to others to maintain balance and neutrality.

Camp/Retreat Overnight

- **Overview:** Planning and implementing a camp or retreat event for families that includes an overnight or multiple night stays is an advanced-level undertaking. These events also provide for a lot of informal bonding between family members, invited guests and the event organizers. Careful planning and execution will have a huge impact on the event’s success and ensure a good experience for those working at the event too.
- **Planning:** Many of the same considerations previously discussed in this Guide will also hold true for an overnight event. Having a planning committee is necessary for this magnitude of an event, and those with previous experience with running overnight events is extremely beneficial. With an event with many components, regular meetings over as long a time as possible prior to the event is highly recommended. Involving planning members who can contribute in between meetings is also very important.

- **Type of Camp or Retreat:** Your planning team will need to decide what type of camping/retreat experience you are looking for and can afford. Some examples are tent, RV, cabins, retreat center, or hotel.
- **Date:** Gather input about when the weather will be most conducive for your event, especially if activities are to be held outdoors or require traveling long distances. Will the event activities fit within one overnight or require more time? Will it be helpful if this event occurs over a weekend with a holiday or will that be a deterrent for families to attend?
- **Theme:** For such a long event, having a theme becomes helpful to keep the activities and topics around a central theme. Decorating and using imagery to underscore that theme is always helpful.
- **Family Scholarships:** With the cost of travel to a central location, securing money to fund partial scholarships is a great way to help remove barriers for families with limited financial resources. Allowing the family to contribute, even with a small amount, can provide an incentive to attend. Consider the options of event advertising including whom families can contact for scholarship help and by when, or approaching families known to be undergoing hardship or mentioning assistance when calling to make invitations to families who have not registered but are believed to benefit. Your event planning committee will need to decide how to handle requests promptly, fairly, and discreetly.
- **Camp Volunteers/Volunteer Coordinators:** Overnight events require a significant number of volunteers to run smoothly. Volunteer Coordinators provide structure and guidance, especially when situations occur. Here are some highly recommended components of your volunteer program:
 - Decisions about minimum ages/requirements/experience needed for volunteers (fluent in sign language, for example)
 - Background checks for volunteers
 - References for volunteers
 - In-person/video interviews of volunteers
 - Code of conduct forms signed by each volunteer, committing to child safety and event/camp/agency rules
 - Emergency plans created for each type of incident
 - How the needs of children with health concerns met
- **Meals/Beverages:** Will meals be provided, or will everyone be responsible for bringing their own? Plans for allergies and special diet needs made. Ensure participants will be well-hydrated and food available between meals for anyone with need.
- **Entertainment/Child Activities:** What type of entertainment will be provided for the adults and what type of activities for the children?

- **Curfews:** What will the curfew be for the children and teen volunteers?
- **Liability:** Does your program have the necessary liability insurance and/or will waivers need to be signed by participants?

Mom's Event

- **Overview:** A “Mom’s Event” is an overnight retreat for mothers of children who are deaf or hard of hearing or their female caregivers.
- **Timeframe:** This example is a 24-hour timeframe, from Noon one day to Noon the next.
- **Location:** The event could be held at a hotel, resort, or retreat center. To reduce costs, consider a location that may have breakfast included.
- **Sponsorship/In-Kind/Scholarships/In-Kind:** Consider seeking sponsors or in-kind donations for small gifts, needed access services, pampering activities, and partial or full scholarships for mothers who otherwise could not afford to attend.
- **Event Bags:** Seek informational materials and giveaways from businesses and organizations and make event bags stuffed with goodies (spa items, coupons for self-care products, a water bottle and snack for later).
- **Name Tags:** Think about providing name tags for all the mothers with their first name large enough to read and the city they live in. (This helps bring mothers geographically close together.)
- **Maximum Attendance:** Consider limiting the attendance (40 in larger cities) to keep the event personal and intimate.
- **Sleeping Arrangements:** Decide whether to have different pricing for sharing a room versus single room.
- **Treats:** Consider having chocolate and other goodies to pass around in a basket. Be aware of food allergies and restrictions to be inclusive.
- **Door Prizes:** If having door prizes, create a decorative table on the perimeter of the room. Ask local businesses for donations or buy items if budget allows.
- **Spa Treatments:** Consider having massages, manicures, or other “spa” treatments. If at a hotel, consider asking if they would provide a free private room for privacy/relaxation or find such a location. One option is to approach local massage programs or spa training programs for students who may need practicum hours.
- **Crafts:** A possible activity is setting up crafting areas with necessary items and instructions or staffed with people who can lead the activity in a fun, unstructured way. Examples are making jewelry, painted objects, dreamcatchers, soap, picture frames.

- **Check-In:** You will want to have a check-in area where participants can be greeted warmly, get the name of their roommate (if sharing) and the agenda, event bag, and register for door prizes, to kick off the event.
- **Evening Agenda:** One person should welcome the group, share who is hosting, review the agenda for the retreat, establish communication ground rules, and ask for respect and confidentiality of all that is shared. Then they can lead introductions which can include:
 - Name
 - Where from
 - Children, ages, hearing levels
 - What the parent hopes to gain from the retreat
- **Ice Breakers:** If time allows, have several ice breakers planned so the participants can begin to know each other better. Make sure your ice breakers promote movement, as sitting for an entire retreat can be hard. Be flexible with the games, gauge your group and determine what they may like.
- **Upcoming Events:** Share upcoming events and point out any information/resources on tables.
- **Door Prize Drawing:** It's a nice touch to provide inexpensive, handmade, or donated items so each participant can receive an item (recommend continually stocking this supply as it comes in handy for future events). Items like candles, plaques, books, children's items, comfort items (scarves, lotion, jewelry).
- **Keynote Presenter:** Consider a presenter who can talk casually on a topic of interest, such as: growing up D/HH, parenting children who are D/HH (dad perspective).
- **Dinner:** Foster an environment that creates opportunities for the participants to mingle with others they haven't met before.
- **After Dinner Time:** Participants could sign up for massages, spa treatments or craft sessions. Encourage a quiet time if the event is held at a location where staying up late in common areas would be a distraction to those wishing to sleep.
- **Next Day Agenda:**
 - Breakfast plans.
 - Discussion: Consider having a panel as a closing session, such as D/HH young adults or adults.
 - Closing: It is a good idea to end with some activity that creates a bond between attendees.
 - Evaluation: Allow enough time for participants to complete evaluation.
 - Participant Contact List: Consider having participants sign a release for sharing their personal information with other participants (to be distributed after the event.)

- **Follow-Up:** After the event, send an email to all participants thanking them for coming. If you wish, with any follow-up information promised, such as participant contact information lists or content information. Be sure to thank the sponsors.

Fundraising Events

- **Overview:** Fundraising events can serve as a community-building event and aid in keeping an organization independently operated (versus contracts and grants with a set outcome from a third-party). Different examples of these events are live and silent auctions, charity races, polo parties, cocktail and wine-tastings, dinner, and entertainment program tickets, and more. Ensure the events are accessible to all participants and are balanced and neutral as previously discussed in this Guide.
- **D/HH Stories:** To emphasize the unique nature of raising a child who is D/HH, consider infusing stories into your event, such as a short presentation by a parent, child, D/HH adult or provider/stakeholder.
- **Resources:** Free online information about fundraising support include “Asking Matters”, “Nonprofits are Messy”, and “Charity How To.”
- **Relationship Building:** One thing to keep in mind is that fundraising involves relationships. If you are doing a good job with event planning for parents, you will likely be able to do a good job with fundraising. Asking for funding is really inviting others to share your program’s vision for children and families. Building relationships is the way to do that. View these events as an opportunity to share your program’s good work with people who have the means to help you carry out your mission by financing your staff and activities.
- **Sponsorship Opportunities:** Your planning team should discuss how you will recognize and “reward” those who sponsor tables, donate items etc. Creating a way to show genuine appreciation for ALL donations, no matter how small, while also honoring those who give in large ways (such as developing sponsor tiers: gold, silver, etc.) encourages future donations.
- **Ideas:** Silent Auctions, 5K Running/Walk Event, Entertainment Event, Wine & Cheese, Brewpub, Clothing sale (with program logo) Bake-off, Dinner Parties, etc.

Addendum - Samples/Templates

Community Partner Letter

[Logo and address/letterhead]

Dear [Community Partner]:

Thank you for joining [program name] in facilitating an event for our families. We really appreciate and value collaboration with our community partners, all working together to support families with children who are deaf and hard of hearing.

[Program Name] provides unbiased information and support to families as they continue to learn about their child's communication needs, and how their hearing level may impact his/her growth and development. The support we all provide helps parents to make choices that work best for them in their unique situation.

For this event, I [title] will be the Coordinator and point person. I ask that any suggestions, questions and/or concerns should be communicated to me, and I will make sure to address those quickly.

As community partners for this event, I look forward to your support as I develop this event for our families. Thank you again for your participation.

Together, we make a stronger network for our families.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

[Name]

[Title]

[Contact Information]

Donation Receipt

[Logo and Address]

Date:

Dear Sir/Madam:

Thank you for your donation to [program name] for our [event name] on [date]. It is people like you that help us achieve our goals.

Our tax-exempt number is [x] for your tax purposes. Please use this letter as a receipt for your donation.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Title

Program Name

Name:

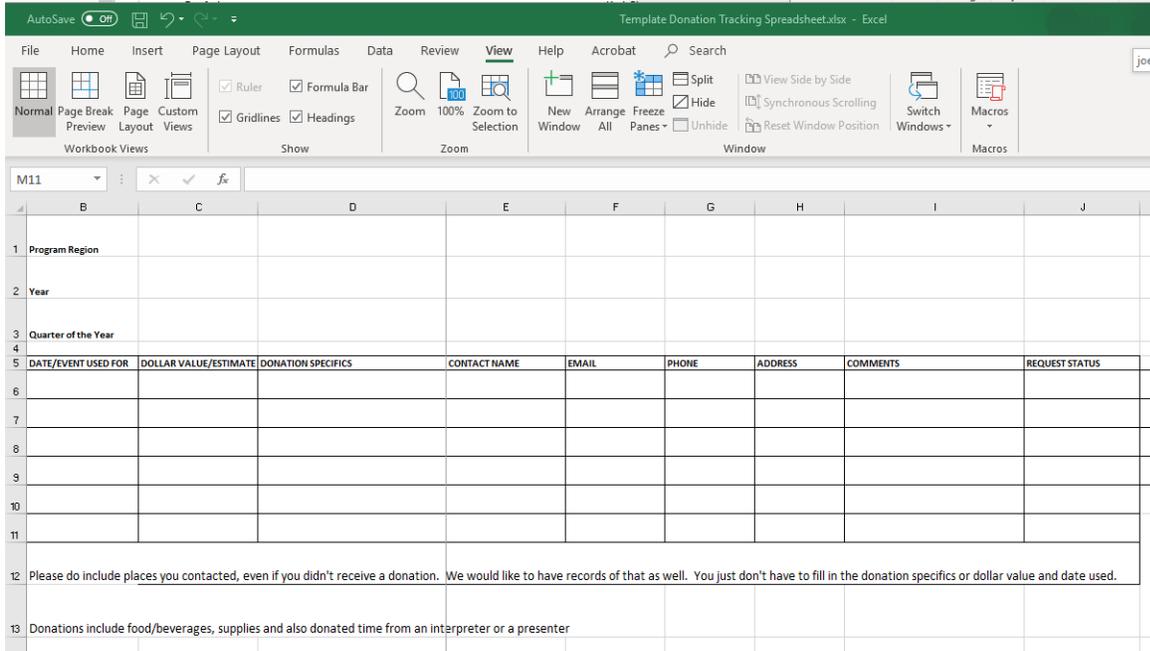
Donation Description:

Total Value:

Donation Tracking Spreadsheet

Download at:

<https://handsandvoices.org/resources/pubs/template-donation-tracking-spreadsheet.xlsx>



Evaluation

[Logo]

[Event Date]
[EVENT TOPIC]
["SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE TOPIC"]

Event Evaluation

Please circle ONE

#1 objective from your pre-event form

1	2	3	4	5
<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>No Opinion</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>

#2 objective from your pre-event form

1	2	3	4	5
<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>No Opinion</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>

#3 objective from your pre-event form.

1	2	3	4	5
<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>No Opinion</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>

I am satisfied with the amount of time and interaction with [program name] staff.

1	2	3	4	5
<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>No Opinion</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>

I am satisfied with the amount of time to interact with other families

1	2	3	4	5
<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>No Opinion</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>

I am satisfied with the amount of time and interaction with the Adult Role Models

1	2	3	4	5
<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>No Opinion</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>

Additional Comments:

Fundraiser Volunteer Hours Confirmation Letter

[*Logo and Address*]

[*Date*]

[*Volunteer name*]

On behalf of [program name] we would like to thank you for all the hard work put forth at the [name of the event] on [date] at [location.]. Please know that your service was greatly appreciated, as it was absolutely essential to the success of the event.

Please note that we have recorded you as working a total of _____ volunteer hours at this event. Please feel free to use this letter as verification of hours served and contact [*program name*] if you need any further verification.

As you know, [program name] is a 501c3 nonprofit organization [Tax ID Number]. The organization serves families throughout [location] who have children who are deaf and hard of hearing as well as supporting those professionals who work with them. With your contribution we will have the ability to continue our family support program.

We are so grateful for your willingness to serve as a friend of the [program name].

Thanks Again!

[*Signature*]

[*Program contact name*]

[*Program name*]

Participant Registration and Photo Release Form

[logo] Registration Sign-in # in your group _____

[Title of Event] _____ [Date of Event] _____

Participants' Name (print) _____

Professional Title (if applies) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone # _____ Cell Phone # _____ Email _____

- Yes No Do you currently receive emails from [program name]?
- Yes No Do you want to be on [program name] emailing list (1 to 2 emails weekly and newsletters)?
- Yes No Are you interested in becoming a [program name] volunteer?
- Yes No Are you interested in volunteering and/or serving on the planning committee for this event next year?

Photo Permission

I, _____, give permission for
Your name (print)

[program name] to use photos of myself and/or my child for public relations purposes. It is clearly understood that no royalty fee, or payment of any kind will be paid to me for the use of photos that include myself or my child in whole or in part.

Please list yourself and the participants that are minors (under the age of 18 years) for which you are the legal guardian.

Participants' Name (print) _____ Signature _____

Guardian Signature if Minor _____

Participants' Name (print) _____ Signature _____

Guardian Signature if Minor _____

Participants' Name (print) _____ Signature _____

Guardian Signature if Minor _____

Participants' Name (print) _____ Signature _____

Guardian Signature if Minor _____

I learned about this event (circle any):

Facebook

[*Program name*] Newsletter

From a friend

From my [*parent leader*]

[*Program name*] email

Flyer from school

Other: _____

Registration Tracking Spreadsheet

Download Here:

<https://handsandvoices.org/resources/pubs/template-registration-tracking-spreadsheet.xlsx>

The image shows a screenshot of an Excel spreadsheet titled "Template Registration Tracking Spreadsheet.xlsx". The spreadsheet is open in Microsoft Excel, and the ribbon shows the "Home" tab. The spreadsheet has the following columns and rows:

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	Family Last Name	Adults First Names	# of Adults	# of Children	Program Member (Y/N)	Accomodations Requested	Food Allergies	Cell Phone Number	Email Address
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									
7									
8									
9									

Scheduling Form

Event Scheduling Form

Staff: Please fill out this form and notify Event Coordinator to initiate an event

Program Staff Hosting:
Contact person/s and contact info to use on flyers/website/mass e-mails/Eventbrite:
Date and Time:
Location: Has the location been screened (physically viewed) for safety, appropriateness, cleanliness, parking accessibility, bus-ing accessibility (if applicable), restroom accessibility, etc.? Has someone from the location been asked if there is going to be any construction or any other major disruptions between now and the date of the event?
Community Partner(s) (if applicable):
Targeted Audience (Is there a specific age range for this event?):
Professional Presenter and their contact info (Do you need help finding a professional for your event?):
Event Title and Description/ Presentation title (if different than event title):
Three Learning Objectives from the presenter (these will be part of the event survey questions): 1. 2. 3.
Event Goal Description:
Activities/Food/Catering/etc.:
Budget/donations:
RSVP date:
Please note any questions after reading Event Planning Guide:
Volunteers:
Number of D/HH Adult Role Models Attending:

Student Volunteer Agreement

Deaf / Hard of Hearing 2019 Family Event

[date]

[time]

[location]

Student Volunteer Form

Volunteer Full Name: _____

Village Name: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Emergency Contact Person: _____ & Contact#: _____

If under 18 years of age: _____

Names of parents/guardians: _____

Parents'/ Guardians' contact number(s) _____

Agreement:

I understand that this volunteer position that I have freely accepted will not provide any monetary compensation for my services. I will be able to earn up to [number of hours] hours of community service for my volunteer time given. I also understand that I will be given the opportunity to eat a meal with the group during lunch hour, free of charge.

Signature: _____ / _____
Student *Parent*

I understand that this volunteer position has given me opportunity to swim at the [location of event] pools area, after volunteer hours are completed. Further, I understand that the D/HH events coordinators are not responsible for supervision as I freely take part in such recreational activities after my volunteer services are completed.

Signature: _____ / _____
Student *Parent*

I further agree to save and hold harmless, indemnify, and defend the D/HH family events coordinators or other affiliated representatives, including [location of event], from any claim that may be initiated by me or my family for any losses, damages or injuries arising out of my participation in this student-volunteer work and my presence on [location of event] property after the event conclusion.

Signature: _____ / _____
Student *Parent*

I understand that the event/program does not carry nor insure any costs related to the activity. I have personal insurance through my own insurance carrier and will use it, as necessary.

Signature: _____ / _____
Student *Parent*

If any emergency medical procedures or treatment are required during the activity, I consent to the activity supervisor(s) taking, arranging for or consenting to the procedures to treatment at his/her/their discretion. It is understood that all reasonable caution will be taken by those person(s) in charge of the activity to prevent injuries, but neither those in charge nor those affiliated with them shall be held responsible for any losses, damages, or injuries arising out of or in correction with student's participation in the activity or the rendering of emergency medical procedure or treatment, if any.

Signature: _____ / _____
Student *Parent*

I give permission to the D/HH family event coordinators to use my picture and/or name in media form, as they see beneficial to their program goals.

Signature: _____ / _____
Student *Parent*

I understand the following responsibilities and will act accordingly:

Student Volunteer responsibilities and duties include:

1. Observing volunteer hours as set by the events coordinator – [hours of event]
2. Assisting with childcare duties and activities.
3. Maintaining calm and nurturing behavior.
4. Being courteous and enthusiastic with given activities.
5. Having a positive attitude and being open to ideas.
6. Demonstrating team spirit towards other volunteers and coordinators of event.
7. Maintaining order and safety of all involved
8. Remaining in assigned area(s)
9. Accepting/adhering to instructions given by coordinators of event
10. Informing supervisor when leaving “duty-station”
11. Assuming personal responsibilities for personal actions and activities.
12. Providing personal transportation to and from the event
13. NOT participating in any illegal or inappropriate activities.

Signature: _____ / _____
Student *Parent*

By my signature placed below, I promise that the information provided is true and complete

Signature: _____ / _____
Student *Parent*

Parents/guardians, FYI, for emergency purposes, please contact the following:

[names and cell phone numbers of contacts]

Summary Report

Event Summary Report Form

Staff: fill in after event and notify Event Coordinator within 2 weeks of your event date

Families in attendance (include family last names, and # of people in each family):
Any cultural families in attendance [Example: Hmong/SE Asian, Spanish speaking, or Northern African]? This is information [<i>program name</i>] reports to [program funding source]. Please include number in their family who attended.
DHH Teachers in attendance as volunteers (include names). If not in program database, please add or let Event Coordinator know:
Other professionals in attendance as volunteers (include names, title, and organization). If not in database, please add or let Event Coordinator know:
Volunteers in attendance (Other than listed above) (include names, race, hearing or disability status, gender, and hours worked). If not in the database, please add or let Event Coordinator know:
You and your family members in attendance (#):
Total # of people in attendance (<i>everyone added up</i>): [<i>Program name</i>] client families: New families: Adult role models: D/HH teachers: Other professionals: Volunteers: [program name] staff and family: Total:

<p>Any donations received? If yes, please fill in a donation spreadsheet and send it in along with this form. This is information that is reported to [program funding source].</p>
<p>Has the event attendance been added to each family in the database for this event? If you need help with this, please let Event Coordinator know this now.</p>
<p>Are any families new? Have they been added into the program database?</p>
<p>Is any of the contact information for clients new? Has it been updated into the database? If you need help with this, please let Event Coordinator know this now.</p>
<p>Have the surveys and/or evaluations from the event been sent to the central office?</p>
<p>Staff observations of moments, connections of a family with another family or professional, etc.</p>
<p>Comments a client said to you (or overheard) about what they learned or a special moment (at the event, in an e-mail or phone call after the event, etc.). These comments may be different from the comments the parents write on the survey. Often these are the quotes we use in our reporting to reflect the value of events and are used in media materials. They can remain anonymous.</p>

Thank you for helping us report whom we serve!

Volunteer Agreement

Volunteer Application

[Program Name]

[Program Mission Statement]

We accomplish this by hiring trained parent leaders to create parent-to-parent networks; provide resources, information, and outreach activities; and by collaborating with professionals and other parent organizations.

[Program name] is fortunate to have the strong support of community volunteers for our activities. Without their generous contribution of time, the wide range of services we offer would not be possible.

In order to maintain the highest level of service, integrity and safety for all our participants, we require that each Volunteer agree with the following principles, initial each principle and sign below, and complete a background check. A link to the background check will be sent to the email you provide below.

As a Volunteer with [program name], I agree:

- To conduct myself in the most professional and respectful manner with all participants, staff and community partners.
- To support communication choices made by individuals and families that may be different from my own personal belief system and not allow bias to interfere with my participation.
- To never be alone with a child participant without a [program name] staff member present.
- To never give food or drink to a child participant without permission from the child's parent or guardian, ensuring that the child does not have allergies to any food or drink item (see child care checklist, when appropriate.)
- To maintain strict confidentiality about any information regarding a participant child or family.
- That I am over 18 years of age and my own guardian, or if under 18 or not my own guardian, I agree to have a parent or guardian volunteer with me at [program name] events.

Typing your name and date in the spaces below will serve as an electronic signature.

Full Name AND Organization Affiliation

Mailing Address

Phone Number(s)

Email Address

DATE

Please specify American Sign Language, Cued language or Foreign Language skills, if applicable

Proficiency of Language Skills

[logo]

Updated [date]

Thank you so very much for your generous gift of time and for assisting families in their quest for their child to reach their full potential.

Example of Internet Safety Pledge

_____ I will never send or post personal information, such as my addresses, phone number, or school name.

_____ I will never send a person my picture or anything else without my parent's or guardian's permission.

_____ I will tell an adult right away if I come across or receive any information that makes me feel uncomfortable.

_____ I will follow all the rules of the internet sites, including those rules that are based on age of use, parental/guardian approval and knowledge, and public laws.

_____ I will never give out my passwords to anyone, except my parents or guardian.

_____ I will never agree to get together with someone I "meet" online without first checking with my parents or guardian.

_____ I will practice "netiquette" (good manners) at all times when online.

_____ I will not bully or tolerate bullying. I will tell a trusted adult if this is a problem.

_____ I will remember what mode of communication works for me, may not work for someone else.

_____ I will remember that everyone learns, signs/speaks/cues and looks differently.

_____ I won't use bad language.

Pledge explained on [YouTube](#) in spoken English/English captions by MN Hands & Voices Deaf/Hard of Hearing Guide, Shelby Geldon.

Example of Safety Policy

Introduction:

Dear Volunteer, Contractor or Staff Member:

Welcome to [*insert organization name*]!

At [*org name*], we take our responsibility to care for our volunteers, contractors, staff and families very seriously. The pages of this handbook provide a general overview of procedures and guidelines for [org name] volunteers, contractors and staff members. The following procedures have been adopted by [org name] and will be strictly enforced to facilitate a safe environment for our organization and the families we serve.

After you have carefully reviewed this Safety Policies and Procedures Manual, please sign and return the agreement form located on the last page.

Sincerely

[*Organization's Lead Staff Name*]

Overview:

[*Org name*] cares for the families that we serve. We have the desire to protect them as well as our volunteers, contractors, and staff members. [*Org name*] requires that all personnel serving families through our organization to complete 3 Safety Steps before their work begins.

STEP ONE: Fill out an Application

Volunteers, contractors, and staff members are required to complete the [*Org name*] Screening Process, which requires them to fill out a Volunteer, Contractor, or Staff Application.

Additional steps may be required based on level of responsibility and access to children, such as a face-to-face interview or providing references to be checked.

STEP TWO: Review & Sign Policies & Procedures

Volunteers, contractors, and staff members are required to review and sign the policies and procedures outlined in this manual indicating that the applicant has read and understood the material and agrees to comply with policy requirements.

STEP THREE: Criminal Background Check

[Org name] requires that all volunteers, contractors, and staff members undergo a criminal background check. Depending upon position, differing degrees of backgrounds or intensity of background checks may be required.

Abuse Prevention:

REPORTING ABUSE

[*Org name*] has a zero tolerance for abuse in [Org name] programs and activities. It is the responsibility of every volunteer, contractor, and staff member at [Org name] to act in the best interest of families in every program. If volunteers, contractors or staff members observe and/or suspect any physical, emotional, or sexual abuse of any child or family member served by [Org name]. It is the volunteer's, contractor's, or staff member's responsibility to immediately report the observations to an immediate supervisor or the [Organization Executive Director or Board Chair or other Lead Position].

ENFORCEMENT OF POLICIES

[*Org name*] volunteers, contractors and staff members who supervise other volunteers, contractors or staff members are charged with the diligent enforcement of all [*Org name*] policies. Violations of these policies are grounds for reassignment, disciplinary action or dismissal from positions for volunteers, contractors, and staff members. Final decisions related to policy violations will be the responsibility of [*Org name*] .

RESPONSE TO REPORT OF ABUSE

Any report of inappropriate behavior or suspicions of abuse will be reported to the [*Org name*] Executive Director or Board Chair and will be taken seriously. The [*Org name*] Board of Directors will then review the information reported and take appropriate action on behalf of the [*Org name*] , which may include notifying Child Protective Services [contact information] or local police authorities.

Volunteer/Staff/Contractor Abuse Prevention Agreement

[Org name] supports families no matter which language, communication or amplification choices the family has made. [Org name] supports this mission by training parents to act as community leaders to create parent-to-parent networks; provide resources, information, and outreach activities; and by collaborating with professionals and other parent organizations. [Org name] is fortunate to have the strong support of community volunteers for our activities. Without their generous contribution of time, the wide range of services we offer would not be possible.

To maintain the highest level of service, integrity and safety for all our participants, we require that each volunteer, contractor, or staff member agree with the principles outlined below. Please initial each statement and sign. A link to the background check will be sent to the email you provide.

As a Volunteer/Contractor or staff with [*Org name*] :

- I agree to conduct myself in the most professional and respectful manner with all participants, staff, and community partners.
- I agree to support communication choices made by individuals and families that may be different from my own personal belief system and not allow bias to interfere with my participation.
- I agree to never be alone with a child participant without a parent/guardian or another [Org name] volunteer, contractor, or staff person.

I agree to maintain strict confidentiality about any information regarding a participant's child or family.

I have read over the Abuse Prevention Policies and agree to follow this policy.

Typing your name and date in the spaces below will serve as an electronic signature.

Full Name

Mailing Address

Phone Number

Date

Email Address

Supervisor Signature

Thank you so very much for your generous gift of time and for assisting families in their quest for their child to reach their full potential.

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